

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Carol C. Lam***

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***For Immediate Release***

### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** - November 17, 2005

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced that a local electroplating firm and its owner pled guilty today in federal district court in San Diego before United States District Court Judge Napoleon A. Jones to violating the federal Clean Water Act. In pleading guilty, Victor's Premier Plating, Inc. and its owner, Victor Zuniga, admitted that on January 17, 2002, they knowingly exceeded the legal limits of their permit by discharging wastewater contaminated with 39-100 mg/l of zinc (the limit being 2.61 mg/l) and 9-35 mg/l of chromium (the limit being 2.77 mg/l).

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Melanie K. Pierson, who prosecuted the case, wastewater that exceeds the limits for heavy metals such as zinc and chromium is harmful to sewage treatment plants because the metals are toxic to the bacteria that digest the sewage.

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam said, "Protection of our coastal waters and the integrity of our sewage treatment system is a matter of critical importance to the citizens of San Diego and to this office."

Sentencing for both defendants is scheduled for February 6, 2006, at 8:15 a.m., before Judge Jones.

## **DEFENDANTS**

Victor's Premier Plating Inc.

Victor Zuniga

## **SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Count 5: Unlawful Discharge of Pollutants, in violation of Title 33, United States Code, Sections 1317(d) and 1319(c)(2)(A)

Maximum Penalty: 3 years in custody and/or a \$50,000 fine per day of violation (and a minimum fine of \$5,000 per day of violation)

## **AGENCIES**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Criminal Investigation Division

City of San Diego Metropolitan Wastewater Department - Industrial Wastewater Control Program

Federal Bureau of Investigation